

**General Synod Council
Reformed Church in America
Minutes of March 23-24, 2021 Meeting
Zoom Video Meeting**

Welcome and Prayer

Ned Beadel, moderator of the General Synod Council (“GSC”), called the meeting to order on March 23-24, 2021, at 2:01 p.m. (eastern) followed by devotions and prayer. Having established a quorum, members, staff, and guests were welcomed and introduced themselves.

Members Present

The following members of the GSC were present for all or part of the meeting:

Pedro Agudelo	Kent McHeard
Eddy Alemán, <i>ex-officio</i>	Eric Moreno
Philip Assink	Sheila Moses
Ned Beadel	James Nakakihara
Michelle Chahine	Albert Plat
Charles Contreras	Margaret Ritchie
Devonna Cousins	George Rounds
EJ de Waard	Betty Shuster
Bruce Deckinga	Clarence Smith (ELCA)
Stephanie Doeschot	Kimberly Van Es
Jamie Dykstra	Leigh Van Kempen
Hellen Harvey	Harris Van Oort
Anna Jackson	Patricia Varga
Robert Johnson	Imos Wu
David Landegent	

No members of the GSC were absent.

Staff and Guests

The following staff members and guests were present for all or part of the meeting:

Terri Boven, *Recorder*
Elizabeth Brand, *Director of General Synod Operations*
Thomas Smith, *Regional Synod Observer from Council of Synod Executives*
Jillisa Teitsma, *Chief Financial Officer*
Felix Theonugraha, *President of Western Theological Seminary*
Jill Ver Steeg, *Chief Operating Officer*
Angela Worthley, *Recorder*

Consent Agenda

GSC 21-05 Motion made, supported, and carried:

To adopt the consent agenda, including approval of the minutes of the October 23-24, 2020; February 22, 2021; and March 1, 2021 meetings of the General Synod Council; and the *ad interim* appointment of Israel Camacho (at large/commissioned pastor) to the Pastoral Formation Oversight Board.

Requests for Assessment Relief

GSC 21-06 Motion made, supported, and carried:

To grant the request of the Classis of New York for \$87,688.86 in assessment relief in 2021; and further,

To grant the request of the Classis of Queens for \$5,721.10 in assessment relief in 2021.

Moderator Election

Michelle Chahine, chair of the GSC's nominations committee, introduced the following candidates who had agreed to be considered for service as GSC moderator for the term beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022.

- Ned Beadel
- EJ de Waard
- Robert Johnson
- Leigh Van Kempen

Each candidate addressed the GSC.

GSC Job Description (GP 3.1)

General Synod

The GSC discussed a request received from the Vision 2020 Team regarding General Synod.

GSC 21-07 Motion made, supported, and carried:

To affirm the Vision 2020 Team's request for a small group process to be incorporated into the schedule of the General Synod where the Team's report and recommendations will be considered, and to form a small team consisting of several GSC members, several Vision 2020 Team members, and General Synod planning staff to further define such a small group process.

Permanent Committees (GP 10.1 and GP 10.2)

Investment Advisory Committee

Jillisa Teitsma presented the report from the Investment Advisory Committee.

Audit and Risk Management Committee

Bob Johnson presented the report from the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

GSC Job Description (GP 3.7)

General Synod Assessments

Jillisa Teitsma presented recommendations regarding the second General Synod vote on the proposed General Synod bylaws change that affects the manner in which assessments are calculated (*aka* covenant shares) and the 2022 assessments.

GSC 21-08

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To propose to General Synod 2021 that the second vote on the change to the General Synod bylaws in *Book of Church Order* Chapter 3, Part I, Article 3, Section 6c (2019 edition, p. 108) to make Covenant Shares effective be delayed until the next stated session of General Synod.

GSC 21-09

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To propose to General Synod a 2022 per-member General Synod Council assessment amount of \$46.10; and further,

To propose to General Synod a 2022 per-member BOBS assessment amount of \$2.00.

The theological education 2022 assessment has not yet been determined. It will be recommended to GSC at a future meeting.

Ends Monitoring Reports

The general secretary presented monitoring reports for the following:

E-2 Transformed and Transforming

E-3 Church Multiplication

E-4 Global Mission

E-5 Multiracial Future

GSC 21-10

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To amend ends policy E-5 to read as follows (additions are underlined):

E-5

Policy Title: Multicultural and Multiracial Future Freed from Racism

The RCA will be a fellowship of congregations committed to a multicultural and multiracial future freed from racism, engaging all of God's people in mission and ministry and resisting the sin of racism.

Executive Limitations

The general secretary presented monitoring reports and reported compliance for the following:

- EL-3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
- EL-4 Financial Condition and Activities
- EL-6 Emergency CEO Succession
- EL-7 Asset Protection
- EL-9 Communication and Support to the Board
- EL-10 Maintenance of Confidentiality
- EL-11 Relationship with Subsidiary Organizations
- EL-13 Racial Diversity in Staff Team

Recess

The moderator recessed the afternoon session of the March 23, 2021 meeting at 4:29 p.m. (eastern) following by prayer by Kim Van Es.

TUESDAY EVENING

Executive Session

The GSC met in executive session the evening of Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at which the Relationship and Review Committee gave its report.

WEDNESDAY MORNING

Call to Order

The moderator called the morning session of the March 24, 2021 GSC meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. (eastern) followed by devotions and prayer by EJ de Waard.

General Secretary's Presentation

Eddy Alemán, general secretary, addressed the GSC by sharing his thoughts on guiding principles that could be used by the reorganizational team, that will be formed if the Vision 2020 Team's first recommendation is adopted by General Synod, as it thinks and dreams about the future of the Reformed Church in America. The GSC met in small groups for discussion and were given an opportunity to comment and ask questions of the general secretary.

Recess

The moderator recessed the morning session of the March 24, 2021 GSC meeting at 12:28 p.m. (eastern) following prayer by Anna Jackson.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Call to Order

The moderator called the afternoon session of the March 24, 2021 GSC meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. (eastern) followed by prayer.

Western Theological Seminary

Felix Theonugraha, president of Western Theological Seminary (WTS), addressed the GSC regarding proposed revisions to the seminary's articles of incorporation and bylaws that will cause it to move from being legally owned and operated by the General Synod to being affiliated with the Reformed Church in America. These revisions were approved by the WTS board of trustees at its February 2021 meeting and will need to be approved by General Synod. The GSC was given an opportunity to comment and ask questions of the president of WTS.

Moderator Election, continued

GSC 21-11

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To elect Ned Beadel moderator of the General Synod Council for the term July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

James Nakakihara, immediate past president of General Synod, will continue to serve as GSC first vice moderator until the close of the next regular stated session of General Synod.

Phillip Assink, vice president of General Synod, will continue to serve as GSC second vice moderator until the close of the next regular stated session of General Synod.

The General Synod's general secretary serves as GSC secretary.

Council of Synod Executives

A report was received from the Council of Synod Executives (COSE). Tom Smith, regional synod observer from COSE, addressed the GSC.

Racial/Ethnic Councils

Reports were received from the following racial/ethnic councils:

- African American Black Council
- Council for Hispanic Ministries

GSC 21-12

Motion made, supported, and carried to adopt the following recommendations from the African American Black Council:

(1) To authorize the African American Black Council to work with the Commission on Church Order over the next year to determine how and where the proposed RCA antiracism policy could be incorporated into the *Book of Church Order*, and to bring specific proposed changes to the *BCO* to the General Synod Council at its March 2022 meeting, which General Synod Council may then bring to the 2022 General Synod.

(2) To direct the general secretary to challenge RCA congregations, assemblies, institutions, and agencies, through a direct communication, to eradicate all structures and/or systems that support and maintain racism.

(3) To direct the general secretary, in consultation with the African American Black Council, to collect and distribute stories of congregations and assemblies dismantling racism throughout the church.

(4) To direct the general secretary, in consultation with the African American Black Council, to jointly formulate a communication plan to share antiracism resources, and to create an electronic campaign to send information on antiracism resources and trainings to RCA assemblies and seminaries.

(5) To encourage the general secretary to include antiracism training in the existing leadership development initiatives of *Transformed & Transforming*.

(6) To bring the following four recommendations to the 2021 General Synod on behalf of the African American Black Council:

(a) To urge RCA assemblies to provide an annual one-day event dedicated to antiracism.

(b) To urge RCA assemblies and institutions to provide regular antiracism training for students, faculty, and staff, to integrate racially and culturally diverse voices in the

- curriculum, and to revisit hiring policies to ensure that faculty and staff are racially diverse.
- (c) To urge General Synod delegates to consider African Americans and people of color for General Synod officer positions.
 - (d) To commend the African American Black Council for its historical and ongoing commitment to holding up antiracism to the church and holding the RCA accountable for deficiencies.

Native American Indian Ministries

A report was received from the Native American Indian Ministries shepherding team.

GSC 21-13

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To direct the general secretary to continue working with the Native American Indian Ministries shepherding team to further clarify and develop the recommendations in the shepherding team's report.

Permanent Committees, continued

Investment Advisory Committee (GP 10.1)

In response to a question received from a GSC member after the presentation of the Investment Advisory Committee report earlier in this meeting, Jillisa Teitsma reported that the social screening constraints (*aka* environmental, social, corporate governance or ESG) in the GSC's investment guidelines reads as follows:

The investment alternatives chosen in the Portfolio must seek to avoid investments in the securities of companies whose principal business involves the production or distribution of tobacco or alcohol or the business of gambling, or the business of for-profit prisons. The socially responsible investment guidelines are not intended to be a "zero tolerance" policy and the determination, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of these guidelines shall be the sole responsibility of the Investment Manager hired to oversee these investment options.

GSC 21-14

Motion made, supported, and carried:

To appoint a small group of GSC members to study the GSC's investment policies to determine whether armaments (and potentially other ESG items) should be added to the investment policy statements and bring a report and recommendation to GSC in June.

Classis Meeting Visits

GSC members reported orally on visits made to classis meetings.

Leadership Reports

The following GSC members addressed the GSC:

- EJ de Waard, General Synod president
- Philip Assink, General Synod vice president
- Ned Beadel, moderator

Future Dates and Locations

- Late May 2021, Zoom video conference (one hour meeting, date TBD) - for reevaluation of feasibility of fall General Synod meeting
- June 15, 2021, Zoom video conference, 1:00 p.m. (eastern)
- October 2021 pre-General Synod and post-General Synod meetings (TBD depending upon planned General Synod dates)
- Fall 2021 stated GSC meeting – TBD (set for October 23-24 if General Synod does not take place in October)

Adjournment

GSC 21-15

Motion made, supported, and carried to adjourn the March 23-24, 2021 meeting of GSC at 3:18 p.m. (eastern) following closing devotions and prayer by Philip Assink.

Terri Boven, Recorder
Angela Worthley, Recorder